

cal fact. There is not always the evidence of thinking that has been patiently matured, and clarified from its first cruder elements ; and the love of strong, striking expression leads him occasionally into the use of epithets and phrases which jar at least on some ears as slightly irreverent. These, however, with a tendency, perhaps, to overdo parallels, are blemishes upon the surface, and some of them would not be blemishes at all in another kind of work. Much more serious, in our view, is the

THEORY OF PROPHECY

which underlies the book, and gives a character more or less pronounced to all its expositions. We concede that a great service is done by a book which brings out so effectively as this does the human side of prophecy. To understand the work and teaching of Isaiah, we must get rid of our idea of his prophecies as a mere *Church* book ; must cease to regard the prophets as mere foretellers ; must see in them living preachers of righteousness and rebukers of existing sins. But it is one thing to do this, and another practically to give up the idea of predictive prophecy altogether, except as a deduction of the prophet's own mind from certain general principles of the Divine government, or, as a political forecast, the correctness of which depended on the shrewdness of his judgment in seizing the issues of the movements and combinations of his age. That this is Mr. Smith's idea of predictive prophecy, and his only one, needs no proof to any attentive reader of his book. To Isaiah, we are told, political prudence was a part of religion. "Knowledge of men, experience of nations, the mental strength which never forgets history, and is quick to mark new movements as they rise, Isaiah would have called the direct inspiration of God. And it was certainly these qualities in this Hebrew which provided him with the materials for his prediction of the siege of Jerusalem" (p. 214). The same thought is elaborated more fully in the chapter on Isaiah's predictions towards the close of the book (ch. xxiv.). It is not only that Isaiah's convictions which may be called political are "evidently gathered from his observation of